

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS MAPUTO 000354

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/S JDIFFILY, G/IWI LKHADIAGALA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [ELAB](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [SCUL](#) [SOCI](#) [KWMN](#) [MZ](#)

SUBJECT: CHILD MARRIAGE IN MOZAMBIQUE

REF: STATE 36341

1. Mozambique's new Family Law, which entered into force in October 2004, sets the minimum age for civil marriage at 21 for those who marry without their parents' consent. Parental consent is compulsory for civil marriage for persons aged 18 through 20. With parental consent and under exceptional conditions (pregnancy, for example), it is possible to get married at 16 years old. The new Family Law applies equally for men and women. The new law marks a significant departure from pre-existing policy, which established the minimum age for civil marriage at 16 for boys and 14 for girls.

2. Dependable statistics for child marriage in Mozambique are not available. However, a 2003 study by the Mozambican Women Lawyers Association (AMMJC), carried out during the preparation process for the new Family Law, shows that the practice is common in remote rural areas and in Muslim communities. Underage marriage is considered more or less equally common in the poorer African Muslim communities and the relatively wealthy South Asian Muslim community. To spread awareness of the new Family Law into communities, the Ministry of Social Action organized three regional workshops in 2004. In workshop seminars, the Ministry specifically focused on disadvantages that early marriage entails for girls, such as less access to education and low future incomes in agriculture and small business.

3. There are currently no USG-funded initiatives to reduce the effects of child marriage in Mozambique. The USG does have several development programs targeted toward girls and young women. Within the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, USAID carries out a range of prevention and care programs targeted to young women; several of these programs address basic life skills and choices. On another front, starting in FY05, the Ambassador's Scholarship fund will provide primary school scholarships and basic educational materials to 6,000 economically vulnerable girls. Also, in FY04 the Embassy has provided DHRF grants to two community organizations that will be disseminating information on the 2004 Family Law. These programs have potential for incorporating discussion of child marriage, but it unclear whether such activity would be appropriate in all cases.

LA LIME